DEVELOPING A NEW GENERATION OF SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONER ACTIVISTS

Jeff Strietzel
Baylor University

Rishi Sriram
Baylor University

Abstract

In this article, we discuss the role of scholarly practice in activism and advocacy for student affairs professionals. We provide an overview and history of scholarly practice in student affairs, highlight the challenges and barriers to scholarly practice, and provide a needed connection between scholarly practice and activism in student affairs. We then provide four practical suggestions for how student affairs professionals can use scholarly practice as a form of activism: (a) research local, (b) grasp the big picture, (c) tell students' stories, and (d) put it in writing.

Public education in the United States was developed to provide Americans access to education and related opportunities for learning and social mobility (Kerr, 2001). Hence, public education was a project motivated by social justice priorities. Decisions by state officials and administrators were aimed to improve equity across geographic location and social class, but White European males benefitted from these efforts while women and Persons of Color were often excluded (Thelin, 2011). Therefore, rather than increasing equity, public education became a catalyst for inequality between the students who were admitted and those who were rejected (Zylstra, 2011). Institutions of higher education perpetuated injustice in similar ways with enrollment processes that helped elite colleges replicate advantages from one generation to the next (Soares, 2007).

After the Civil Rights Movement commenced and Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, higher education administrators initiated measures to increase racial access and diversity on college campuses (Thelin, 2011). However, admitting underrepresented students did little to increase equity when those students were not supported. In response, some student affairs professionals began to view social justice activism as congruent with their roles (Stewart & Quaye, 2019). Fifty years later, there remains a lack of clarity regarding the role of activism in the student affairs profession. As Zylstra (2011) observed, "We are aware of the issues, we help students become aware of the issues, and we try hard not to damage human equality through the lives we lead, but we stop there" (p. 385). To complement calls among student affairs leaders for socially just action, we believe it is time to raise a new generation of scholar-practitioner activists in student affairs.

As university faculty members and higher education administrators, we have witnessed many student affairs graduate students and professionals desire to make a positive difference in the lives of others and, by extension, our society through their work in higher education. These members of the profession sometimes express their desires through activism or advocacy—seeking change in policies and practices to advance a cause (Stewart et al., 2020). College students, especially those with minoritized identities, desire and need support from student affairs professionals in their fight for social justice (Chávez & Ramrakhiani, 2020; Kezar, 2010). Social justice activism is an expectation of the student affairs profession because the social justice and inclusion competency necessitates action on the part of student affairs professionals to help create a more just society. The authors of the ACPA and NASPA competencies (2015) noted a developing "shift from awareness of diversity, as implicit in prior competency literature (i.e., Lovell & Kosten, 2000) to a more active orientation" (p. 4). This active orientation should include using the tools of research and scholarship to advocate for change.

By *activism*, we refer to actions of student affairs professionals meant to create change that leads to a more socially just and inclusive experience for college students (Stewart et al., 2020). As noted in *Professional Competency Areas of Student Affairs Educators* (ACPA & NASPA, 2015), the social justice and inclusion competency requires "both a process and a goal which includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to create learning environments that foster equitable participation of all groups while seeking to address and acknowledge issues of oppression, privilege, and power" (p. 14). Achieving this competency involves seeking to meet the needs of all students, equitably distributing resources, raising social consciousness, and repairing past and current harms to student groups (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

To develop in the social justice competency, student affairs professionals need to understand oppression, privilege, and power. To reach what ACPA and NASPA (2015) considered intermediate or advanced levels of this competency area, student affairs professionals also need to lead

and advocate for change on campus in ways that promote justice. Student affairs professionals can experience conflict, however, when attempting to advocate for change, even when changes are in the interest of students within their institutions (Harrison, 2010). Harrison, in her study of six student affairs professionals, found professionals had to act against "the system" or "the administration" to advocate for students (p. 203). Some participants experienced negative consequences for challenging institutional structures. Harrison (2010) suggested helping new professionals to "[think] through the role conflicts they are likely to experience in the job so that they can develop the theoretical and practical tools necessary to preempt some of the consequences" of their behaviors (p. 211). Kezar (2010), in a study of 165 faculty and staff on five campuses who partnered with students in activism, suggested that student affairs professionals need to be cognizant of institutional context, culture, and best strategies for moving forward with advocacy. But these professionals often feel underprepared by graduate programs for the challenges they will face as student advocates (Harrison, 2014). We believe student affairs professionals should be prepared to advocate for students in their administrative work through conducting research and using the findings to demonstrate the need for change.

Scholarly Practice as Activism

The role of scholarly practice and the use of research methods are underexamined topics in student affairs literature (Bettencourt et al., 2017; Strietzel et al., 2020). Some professionals who desire to create positive change may not view qualitative or quantitative methods as useful tools for creating such change. Sriram (2017a, 2017b) advocated for the active use of research by student affairs professionals to promote needed change in higher education. Drawing from Kahneman's (2011) work on the psychology of intuition versus reason, Sriram suggested that student affairs professionals need to *think slow*—use evidence-based

practice—in addition to *thinking fast*—using their intuition. Sriram (2017b) argued, "It takes courage to gather evidence that may reveal that current processes are not meeting desired goals, but such work will lead to a better experience for college students" (p. 31). Similarly, few researchers have examined the socialization of student affairs practitioners to engage their work as creating social justice on campus (Boss et al., 2018). Professional development workshops are one way to develop research competencies among student affairs professionals to help them better achieve their goals (Strietzel et al., 2020). Although limited, extant literature offers evidence that if student affairs professionals are afforded—and engaged—in opportunities to develop research skills and a scholarly identity, they can find success using the tools of research to improve practice (Bettencourt, 2018; Strietzel et al., 2020).

In this article, we discuss the role of scholarly practice in activism and advocacy for student affairs professionals. Although our ideas might be most influential to graduate students and new professionals, we hope all student affairs professionals will consider our words. Faculty in student affairs and higher education graduate programs, although not our primary audience, might also consider integrating notions of scholarly practice as activism into their respective teaching and program curricula. Herein we provide an overview and history of scholarly practice in student affairs, highlight the challenges and barriers to scholarly practice, and provide a needed connection between scholarly practice and activism in student affairs. We then provide four practical suggestions for how student affairs professionals can use scholarly practice as a form of activism: (a) research local, (b) grasp the big picture, (c) tell students' stories, and (d) put it in writing.

Overview and History of Scholarly Practice in Student Affairs

College administrators originally created administrative staff positions to serve students so

college professors could focus on their teaching and research responsibilities (Kerr, 2001). In light of increasing enrollment trends in higher education, the authors of the seminal *Student Personnel Point of View* (SPPV) declared the "coordination of student personnel work is urgently needed" (American Council on Education, 1937, p. 4). Student affairs professionals have since established themselves as co-educators—supportive campus members with expertise in fostering college students' holistic development (American Council on Education, 1937).

From the earliest years of the student affairs profession, student affairs educators have supported students, even during trying times. For example, these professionals facilitated campus housing and student involvement activities following the enrollment boom after World War II (Long, 2012). Many student affairs professionals were on the front lines of the campus riots in the 1960s (Rudolph, 1990). Student affairs professionals were hired in increasing numbers during and following the so-called Golden Age of higher education from the 1980s and into the 2000s when campuses were burgeoning with students and funding was available to build many and larger campuses (Thelin, 2011). Student affairs professionals were also at the forefront of maintaining safe campuses during the COVID-19 pandemic (Mucci-Ferris et al., 2021). These professionals represent a visible commitment to higher education access and success. Central to the profession is the belief that education can transform lives (American Council on Education, 1949), and student affairs professionals meaningfully support and develop college students, college and university campuses, and society through their efforts (Schuh et al., 2017).

Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered* sparked dialogue for members of U.S. higher education when he contended that the concept of scholarship should extend beyond merely discovering knowledge (i.e., published research) to also include the integration, application, and teaching of knowledge. Boyer (1990) argued for a generous and inclusive use of the idea of scholarship in the academy. Thereby, he legitimized all members of the academy who used scholarship, not only those who published it. Since Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered*, student affairs leaders have called for an increase in the quantity and quality of scholarship in the field—reading, conducting, publishing, or applying research (American Council on Education, 1937, 1949; Jablonski et al., 2006; Schroeder & Pike, 2001). Today, there is consensus among student affairs leaders that good practice is grounded in good scholarship (Blimling & Whitt, 1999; Hatfield & Wise, 2015) and vice versa (Phillips Bingham et al., 2015). Boyer's broader definition of scholarship does not, however, necessarily exempt practitioners from, nor prompt practitioners toward, conducting research. Prominent members of the profession have called for more scholar-practitioners—student affairs professionals who are willing to research and publish their findings and ideas to move the profession forward with empirical research (Blimling, 2013).

The profession has grown and become more mature in its theoretical foundations and professional structures since *SPPV* and *Scholarship Reconsidered* were published. Two notable examples are the competencies outlined in *The Handbook of Student Affairs Administration* (Barr & Desler, 2000) and *Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession* (Schuh et al., 2017). These competencies range from the historical and professional contexts of the field to theoretical and organizational frameworks. ACPA and NASPA outline at least 10 essential competencies for members of the profession (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Sriram, 2014b). The number of student affairs graduate programs, the educational expectations for entry-level roles, the members of the field earning terminal degrees, and assessment, evaluation, and research (AER) efforts have all increased in recent decades (ACPA & NASPA, 2010; 2015; Ortiz et al., 2015). Student affairs professionals are collectively increasing in AER skills. AER skills allow student affairs professionals to advocate for desired and needed chang-

es in higher education through the power of the pen (Saunders et al., 2005). There is a growing contingency of student affairs professionals who adopt a scholar-practitioner mentality and develop the requisite skills (Nguyen et al., 2019). However, there are many who do not possess the requisite AER competencies (Schuh et al., 2016; Sriram & Oster, 2012) or view themselves as "scholarly practitioners" (Hatfield & Wise, 2015).

We envision a student affairs profession brimming with *scholar-practitioners*. By scholar-practitioner, we mean student affairs professionals who integrate research into their work (Kupo, 2014). Integrating research would include but not be limited to learning the seminal research of the field, staying abreast with emerging research and trends in the field, and regularly contributing to the body of knowledge through research and writing. As Hatfield and Wise (2015) claimed, "Scholarship is leadership and takes us from practice to influencing the field of student affairs" (p. 4). Before we discuss how such scholarly practice can better serve activists on campus, we want to acknowledge certain challenges and barriers to scholarly practice.

Challenges and Barriers to Scholarly Practice

There are challenges and barriers that constrain student affairs professionals' scholarly endeavors, identity development, and full adoption of scholarly practice as a norm (Jablonski, 2005; Sriram, 2011; Strietzel et al., 2020). New professionals, for example, may not understand the relationship between theory and practice or how and why scholarship is important to their daily work (Sriram et al., 2011), while other professionals may not value scholarship (Bettencourt et al., 2017; Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Sriram & Oster, 2012). Limited time is a practical barrier to developing as a scholar-practitioner, but professionals sometimes conflate time restraints with their lack of motivation or aversion to scholarly practice (Strietzel et al., 2020). Organizational priorities

manifested in financial allocations, work distribution, and incentive structures in higher education and student affairs, are typically misaligned with scholarly practice (Kupo, 2014; Strietzel et al., 2020). Gaps between classroom readings in a student affairs graduate program (espoused values) and contradictory workplace behaviors and messages (enacted values) discourage scholarship (Schein, 2010; Sriram & Oster, 2012). Moreover, when student affairs professionals' engagement in scholarship is diminished (e.g., after completing a graduate program), their comfort engaging scholarship and confidence in conducting research inevitably decreases because it feels—and is—unusual for them (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Fey & Carpenter, 1996; Kupo, 2014).

There are also cultural and structural barriers to scholarly practice. Rather than scholar-practitioners as the norm in student affairs, a distinction between scholars and practitioners in the minds and modes of student affairs professional life continues (Hatfield & Wise, 2015). Some faculty and staff in academe consider only tenured and tenure-track faculty to be scholars and all other employees to be practitioners (Kezar & Sam, 2010). Although examples of collaboration between faculty and student affairs professionals exist, institutions of higher learning tend to be siloed, wherein organizational structures make intra-institutional collaboration difficult, especially at research institutions (Buller, 2015). Low levels of collaboration can deter the institutional functionality beyond financial and organizational inefficiencies (Buller, 2015). Interpersonal barriers to scholarly practice include implicit bias, prejudice, diverse versus homogeneous backgrounds, discrimination, and oppressive systems. Student affairs professionals might justifiably feel that articulating and publishing strong positions on hot-topic issues may jeopardize their employment and careers or negatively influence their professional reputation, even as it can for some faculty (Bartlett & Stripling, 2021). Even more relevant to activist scholarship, all professionals labor within power structures that have

embedded disparities and oppressive systems that minoritize and marginalize people (Zylstra, 2011). These are the systems, language, and inequities professionals reify when they do not speak against the inequities and injustices embedded in those structures (Linder et al., 2019; Quaye, 2011). Continued financial instability, social unrest, and political strife influence career pathways in higher education and student affairs (*Enrolling the Class of Covid-19*, 2020; Vonderembse, 2018).

Activism can create real change toward social justice on college campuses. But superficial attempts, such as performative activism, slacktivism (token support for social or political causes; Chandler & Munday, 2016), a lack of understanding rooted in the lack of a desire to learn, racist notions of fairness in the context of centuries-old inequity along racial lines (Kendi, 2016), or placing blame on victims of disadvantageous systems (Perry, 2016) are not acceptable *modi operandi* for members of the profession (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Zylstra, 2011). These barriers serve as areas of focus for student affairs scholar-practitioner activism.

Student affairs leaders in partnership with graduate program faculty must emphasize the importance of research competencies to the profession (Hatfield & Haley, 2017; Sriram, 2017b). Student affairs professionals who are inadequately prepared or lack confidence in their research or writing skills can find or organize their own professional development opportunities or partner with administrators or faculty members to develop needed skills and publish their research (Bettencourt et al., 2017; Hatfield & Wise, 2015; Strietzel et al., 2020). Senior student affairs officers have a responsibility to support student affairs research as part of sharing the good work of their divisions and on behalf of the students they serve (Strietzel et al., 2020).

A couple of ironies lie within the context of challenges, barriers, and risks of conducting research as a means of student affairs activism. The needs for good scholarly practice in student affairs are as urgent as ever, but the opportunities to synergize good scholarship and good practice are increasingly difficult. As Sriram (2014a) noted, "Just as medical doctors study and share the factors that promote health, student affairs practitioners have an obligation to empirically demonstrate effective methods of promoting student learning" (p. 4). Another irony is that faculty and graduate students have traditionally produced the lion's share of published research (Saunders et al., 2005; Sriram & Oster, 2012). Although research conducted by faculty and graduate students is needed, it is not a replacement for rigorous research conducted by new, mid-level, and senior-level practitioners. When student affairs professionals conduct and publish research, they share knowledge discovered by top experts in college student success: themselves.

Scholarly Practice Can Help Student Affairs Activists

Student affairs professionals understand that activism is not limited to stereotypical images of picketing and protests centered around civil politics. In recent decades, student affairs professionals have increasingly counseled college student advocates and facilitated activism by and with college students on U.S. campuses (Chávez & Ramrakhiani, 2020). Scholarly practice is another form of activism that can simultaneously operate within established power structures and serve to challenge injustice. Some student affairs professionals may not view research and scholarly practice as natural or even meaningful tools for social justice change on their campuses. Higher eduction scholars have a history of excluding minoritized persons and their perspectives from higher education scholarship, though some progress has been made in this regard (Risi et al., 2022). Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts should not be limited to activism embedded in whiteness, but scholarly practice can help create systemic change in institutions of higher education.

When student affairs professionals engage

higher education environments, they embody identities and experience privileges and oppression. Persons bearing historically marginalized identities offer expertise about what it means to experience oppression (Freire, 2000) and face greater risk as they engage scholarly activism (Stewart et al., 2020). Members of the profession with privileged identities should humbly use their privileges for equity while acknowledging ways they have benefitted from being beneficiaries of inequitable systems and their limited understanding of being oppressed. Now more than ever, as civil discourse dissolves into tactless discord and reasoned arguments are traded for vicious comments on social media platforms, it is important to discover how scholarly practice might serve as a tool for constructive activism and how student affairs professionals might develop as scholarly activists.

Scholars note that the durability of U.S. higher education despite a constantly changing environment is due to its ability to maintain homeostasis (Birnbaum, 1988; A. Kezar, 2001). This durability has benefits, but one negative consequence is that homeostasis in higher education makes needed systemic change difficult to achieve. Kezar (2012) argued creating change in higher education requires some attention to the teleological school of thought. The teleological paradigm emphasizes scientific management and a rational approach to leadership and change above other factors. Although Birnbaum (1988) discussed how irrational humans can be, he highlighted the constant desire for leaders to appear rational through processes such as strategic planning. The best-known model within the teleological tradition is organizational development, wherein a problem is diagnosed and solutions are searched for until the institution changes enough to resolve the problem (Kezar, 2012). The teleological school of thought is one of the most widely used in higher education.

In contrast to a widely accepted teleological paradigm, activists might rely on political or cultural schools of thought. Activists often find social support by using values-forward rhetoric. Although political, cultural, or values-driven approaches are good and powerful, campus leaders desire to make informed decisions based on data to appear rational, logical, and strategic to their constituents. Such leaders shy away from values-based decisions because their constituents will not all have the same values, leading to cognitive dissonance. In other words, scholarly practice (e.g., quantitative and qualitative research) can create change and lead to more socially just institutions because scholarly activists work with the underlying assumptions of university leaders rather than against them. In addition to presenting impassioned arguments or picketing or campaigning or any of the other worthwhile forms of activism, student affairs professionals working toward greater social justice on campus need data that is rigorously collected, fairly interpreted, and cogently communicated.

Four Practical Ways to Use Scholarly Practice as a Form of Activism

Student affairs professionals have more knowledge—and can develop as scholar-practitioners with less effort—than they might realize (Bensimon, 2007). How can student affairs professionals use scholarly practice as a form of activism? We offer four practical suggestions: (a) research local, (b) grasp the big picture, (c) tell students' stories, and (d) put it in writing.

Research Local

Although top-tier journal publications are a good way to share knowledge, editorial teams typically favor increasingly complex methods and often utilize synthesized data collected from multiple campuses. Many student affairs professionals do not conduct research to submit for such publication because they face internal and external obstacles such as (a) inadequate preparation, (b) the tyranny of the urgent, (c) a lack of clear purpose, and (d) cultural discouragement (Sriram, 2011), as well as a lack of interest and a lack of confidence

(Strietzel et al., 2020). Our call for student affairs professionals to engage research and scholarly practice could be misinterpreted as a call to only publish in highly competitive journals. Instead, we suggest conducting research on a single campus with no intent to publish it nationally. Much like economic activists call for supporting local businesses with the slogan "shop local," we desire to elevate the importance of small-scale research efforts.

In his book that aims to encourage student affairs professionals to use quantitative research in their work, Sriram (2017b) wrote,

> The best research is the research rarely published— the small, internal studies done on single campuses to discover, explore, and improve. The best research studies are the ones that answer your questions about your students. Reading a journal article is a great way to learn and can certainly lead to new ideas for your work. However, no research study will take the place of your own research on your own campus. (p. x)

Regardless of the terminology (e.g., assessment, evaluation, or research), we encourage these forms of "researching local" (Sriram, 2017a). Campus leaders ought to remain attentive to national trends, but they are rightly most interested in the student experience on their own campus. Smaller single-campus studies may do more than multi-institutional, peer-reviewed studies to foster institutional change because the data comes from the very students the decision-makers serve. Thus, for most student affairs professionals, conducting campus-based research is practical, valuable, and will meet the primary goals of the research.

Grasp the Big Picture

Researching local does not preclude student affairs professionals from conducting broadly useful research, including quantitative research. Quantitative, statistics-based research can help student affairs professionals advocate for issues related to social justice and inclusion by identi-fying big-picture trends in higher education. For example, using survey instruments that measure chosen variables of interest is a great way to identify patterns in the student experience. Some variables to consider include sense of community or belonging, institutional integrity, institutional commitment, interactions with faculty, interactions with staff, and interactions with peers.

Sense of community refers to how much students feel they are a member of a community, have influence on that community, have their needs met within the community, and have an emotional connection to the community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Institutional integrity is a measure that identifies any gap between what students believe the institution espoused that the student experience would be like versus what students believe is the actual experience on campus (Braxton et al., 2014). Institutional commitment is the level of loyalty a student feels toward the institution (Braxton et al., 2014). There are also measures that evaluate students' satisfaction with interactions that are academic, social, or more personal in nature with faculty, staff, and peers (Sriram et al., 2020). Research demonstrates that the variables listed above all have a powerful influence on college student success (Braxton et al., 2014; Sriram, Cheatle et al., 2020).

Quantitative research and statistics can help student affairs professionals identify whether and how marginalized populations experience college in ways that statistically and meaningfully differ from majority populations. This type of data can powerfully influence those leaders who use a teleological approach. Research findings can help practitioners advocate for needed change, and ongoing quantitative research can measure the progress of change.

Tell Students' Stories

Corbin and Strauss (2008) noted, "Statistics might be interesting, but it is the endless possibilities to learn more about people that qualitative researchers resonate to" (p. 13). Quantitative re-

search provides trends, patterns, and a breadth of knowledge to help student affairs activists; qualitative research brings voices, stories, and a depth of knowledge to the decision-maker's table. Those who do not engage with qualitative research on a regular basis may incorrectly critique it for not doing what quantitative research does: draw from a sample to make conclusions about a larger population. The purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize but to vocalize participants' experiences.

At the heart of qualitative research lies participants' own words and expressions, but qualitative research is not anecdotal evidence. Anecdotal evidence amounts to unsystematic and cavalier remarks that are more highly esteemed than they ought to be. Researching college students using qualitative methods goes beyond merely sharing stories about students. Qualitative research involves purposeful methods that allow a scholar-practitioner to dive deeply into students' experiences. Corbin and Strauss (2008) explained,

> There are many reasons for choosing to do qualitative research, but perhaps the most important is the desire to step beyond the known and enter into the world of [students], to see the world from their perspective and in doing so make discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge. (p. 16)

Qualitative methods allow the researcher to understand and express the lived experiences of those they study (Van Manen, 2014). Harper (2018) captured the ethos and opportunity of qualitative research as activism well when he said,

> No compliment means more to me than someone who says at the end of one of my speeches, "You just spoke truth to my experience." They often do so with tears in their eyes and with the sincerest expressions of gratitude. This compels me to continue using my platform to advocate for people who have voices that others refuse to hear or take seriously. (p. 84)

Rigorous qualitative research distills individual experiences into a type of intellectual tincture, a distillation of the truth of a person's or group's experience to be shared with others. These potent findings capture the essence of specific experiences and can be shared in a conversation, an article, or a report. Such research can systematically and rigorously understand students' experiences and amplify their voices in spaces students are not typically invited. Then, student affairs professionals can develop larger themes that bring new meaning to social justice and inclusion issues.

Put it in Writing

Meetings, speeches, presentations, protests, and demonstrations are mere fleeting words unless they are chronicled in some manner. Scholarly practice as a form of student affairs activism requires knowledge to be recorded, and the most useful way of doing so is through writing. Writing gives activism durability, a degree of permanence. If student affairs professionals want to create change through meetings, they must ensure that all of the decision-makers are in the room and that the meeting goes precisely according to their agenda. Such meetings represent high-stakes and high-pressure processes for creating change. Writing, by contrast, invites reflection, time, and "thinking slow" precision (Kahneman, 2011), activities all professionals would do well to increase in their work.

Scholarly practice should lead student affairs activists to use quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data that promote needed change. Those findings must be recorded in writing, just as if the end goal was a journal publication. This does not mean, however, that the length of the report needs to be as long as a journal article or that the language of the report must be academic. Instead, brief reports that highlight the most compelling aspects of relevant past scholarship on a topic, clearly explain how data were collected, objectively report findings of those data, and suggest compelling ways forward based on those data will serve best.

Conclusion

The topic of student affairs scholarship as activism is personal to us. Although we are optimistic that student affairs professionals will produce an increasing proportion of student affairs scholarship in the future, and while we believe that institutions will increasingly make significant strides toward diversity, equity, and belonging of minoritized students, we know that there is a tendency for change initiatives to amount to symbolic committees and obligatory communication campaigns. We have been members of diversity committees, including president's and provost's diversity councils, that have mostly served as performative symbols. We believe our experiences might be commonly shared with our colleagues. If student affairs professionals are not making material change and progress toward more equitable and inclusive classrooms and residential spaces and student organizations and campuses, then they are being hypocritical.

Boyer et al. (2015) said it well: "We need scholars who not only skillfully explore the frontiers of knowledge but also integrate ideas, connect thought to action, and inspire students. The very complexity of modern life requires more, not less, information; more, not less, participation" (p. 126). We need student affairs activists to research local, grasp the big picture, tell students' stories, and share written scholarship for audiences on and beyond their campuses. As words without actions amount to slacktivism, actions without scholarship will not fully achieve the aims and potential of student affairs activists. We believe the future of U.S. higher education and student affairs will be characterized by scholars who cultivate and use their attributes and scholarly practices, including conducting research, to create a more equitable and just higher education environment for students and society for all people.

References

ACPA - College Student Personnel International & NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. (2015). *ACPA/NASPA professional competency areas for student affairs educators*.

American Council on Education. (1937). *The student personnel point of view*. Author.

American Council on Education. (1949). *The student personnel point of view*. Author.

Barr, M. J., & Desler, M. K. (2000). *The handbook of student affairs administration* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Bartlett, T., & Stripling, J. (2021, April 29). 'Everybody is a target right now': A university's sacking of a tenured critic sends shock waves. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. https://www.chronicle.com/article/everybody-is-a-target-right-now

Bensimon, E. M. (2007). The underestimated significance of practitioner knowledge in the scholarship on student success. *The Review of Higher Education, 30*(4), 441–469. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2007.0032

Bettencourt, G. M. (2018). *Next generation: Graduate students, new professionals, and preparation programs*. http://developments.myacpa.org/volume-16-issues1-2-next-generation-graduate-students-new-professionals-and-preparation-programs/

Bettencourt, G. M., Malaney, V. K., Kidder, C. J., & Mwangi, C. A. G. (2017). Examining scholar-practitioner identity in peer-led research communities in higher education programs. *Journal for the Study of Postsecondary and Tertiary Education, 2*, 095–113.

Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How colleges work: The cybernetics of academic organization and leadership*. Jossey-Bass.

Blimling, G. S. (2013). Challenges of assessment in student affairs. *New Directions for Student Services, 2013*(142), 5–14.

Blimling, G. S., & Whitt, E. J. (1999). *Good practice in student affairs: Principles to foster student learning*. Jossey-Bass.

Boss, G. J., Linder, C., Martin, J. A., Dean, S. R., & Fitzer, J. R. (2018). Conscientious practice: Post-master's student affairs professionals' perspectives on engaging social justice. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 55*(4), 373–385.

Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton University Press.

Boyer, E. L., Moser, D., Ream, T. C., & Braxton, J. M. (2015). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Jossey-Bass.

Braxton, J. M., Doyle, W. R., Hartley, H. V., Hirschy, A. S., Jones, W. A., & McLendon, M. K. (2014). *Rethinking college student retention*. Jossey-Bass.

Buller, J. L. (2015). *Change leadership in higher edu-*

cation: A practical guide to academic transformation. Jossey-Bass.

Carpenter, S., & Stimpson, M. T. (2007). Professionalism, scholarly practice, and professional development in student affairs. *NASPA Journal, 44*(2), 265.

Chandler, D., & Munday, R. (2016). Slacktivism. In *A Dictionary of Social Media*. Oxford University Press. http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191803093.001.0001/acref-9780191803093-e-1348

Chávez, M., & Ramrakhiani, S. (2020). Resist: An exploration of student activists' partnerships with faculty and student affairs. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 1*(12). https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2020.1784748

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Enrolling the Class of Covid-19. (2020, September 30). CHE. https://www.chronicle.com/article/enrolling-the-class-of-covid-19

Fey, C. J., & Carpenter, D. S. (1996). Mid-level student affairs administrators. *NASPA Journal, 33*(3), 218–231. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.1996.11072410

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. Bergman Ramos, Trans.). Continuum.

Harper, S. R. (2018). My people's professor: Research for the humanization and liberation of Black Americans. In *Taking it to the streets: The role of scholarship in advocacy and advocacy in scholarship* (pp. 79–85). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Harrison, L. M. (2010). Consequences and strategies student affairs professionals engage in their advocacy roles. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 47*(2), 197–214.

Harrison, L. M. (2014). How student affairs professionals learn to advocate: A phenomenological study. *Journal of College and Character, 15*(3), 165–178.

Hatfield, L. J., & Haley, K. J. (2017). Scholarship of student affairs professionals: Writing strategies and identity explored through coaching. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice; Oxford, 54*(4), 441–453. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2017.1357565

Hatfield, L. J., & Wise, V. L. (2015). *A guide to becoming a scholarly practitioner in student affairs*. Stylus.

Jablonski, M. (2005). Where is the scholarship in student affairs? *NASPA Journal, 42*(2), 293–298. https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.1469

Jablonski, M., Mena, S. B., Manning, K., & Carpenter, S. (2006). Scholarship in student affairs revisited: The summit on scholarship. *NASPA Journal, 43*(4), 182–200. https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.1729

Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Kendi, I. X. (2016). *Stamped from the beginning: The definitive history of racist ideas in America*. PublicAffairs. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bayloru/detail.action?docID=5369184

Kerr, C. (2001). *The uses of the university*. Harvard University Press.

Kezar, A. (2001). Understanding and facilitating organizational change in the 21st century. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 28*(4), 147.

Kezar, A. J. (2010). Faculty and staff partnering with student activists: Unexplored terrains of interaction and development. *Journal of College Student Development, 51*(5), 451–480.

Kezar, A. J. (2012). Organizational change in a global, postmodern world. In *The Organizational of Higher Education: Managing Colleges for a New Era. Michael N. Bastedo (Ed.)* (pp. 181–221). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kezar, A., & Sam, C. (2010). Understanding the new majority of non-tenure-track faculty in higher education: Demographics, experiences, and plans of action. *ASHE Higher Education Report, 36*(4), 1–133. https://doi.org/10.1002/aehe.3604

Kupo, V. L. (2014). Becoming a scholar-practitioner in student affairs. *New Directions for Student Services, 147*, 89–98. https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1002/ss.20103

Linder, C., Quaye, S. J., Stewart, T. J., Okello, W. K., & Roberts, R. E. (2019). "The whole weight of the world on my shoulders": Power, identity, and student activism. *Journal of College Student Development, 60*(5), 527–542. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2019.0048

Long, D. (2012). The foundations of student affairs: A guide to the profession. In *Environments for student growth and development: Librarians and student affairs in collaboration* (pp. 1–39). Association of College & Research Libraries.

Lovell, C. D., & Kosten, L. A. (2000). Skills, knowledge, and personal traits necessary for success as a student affairs administrator: A meta-analysis of thirty years of research. *NASPA Journal, 37*(4), 535–572. https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.1118

McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology, 14*, 6–23.

Mucci-Ferris, M., Grabsch, D. K., & Bobo, A. (2021). Positives, negatives, and opportunities arising in the undergraduate experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of College Student Development, 62*(2), 203–218. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2021.0017

Nguyen, D. J., Mathuews, K., Herron, A., Troyer, R., Graman, Z., Goode, W. A., Shultz, A., Tackett, K., & Moss, M. (2019). Learning to become a scholar-practitioner through research experiences. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 56*(4), 365–378. https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2019.1611591

Ortiz, A. M., Filimon, I., & Cole-Jackson, M. (2015). Preparing student affairs educators. *New Directions for Student Services, 2015*(151), 79–88. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20139

Perry, A. M. (2016, May 2). Black and brown boys don't need to learn "grit," they need schools to stop being racist. *The Hechinger Report.* http://hechingerreport.org/black-brown-boys-dont-need-learn-grit-need-schools-stop-racist/

Phillips Bingham, R., Bureau, D. A., & Garrison Duncan, A. (Eds.). (2015). *Leading assessment for student success: Ten tenets that change culture and practice in student affairs.* Stylus.

Quaye, S. J. (2011). Girl or woman? Dorm or residence Hall? What's the big deal about language?: The power of language. In *Contested issues in student affairs: Diverse perspectives and respectful dialogue* (pp. 280–297).

Risi, S., Nielsen, M. W., Kerr, E., Brady, E., Kim, L., McFarland, D. A., Jurafsky, D., Zou, J., & Schiebinger, L. (2022). Diversifying history: A large-scale analysis of changes in researcher demographics and scholarly agendas. *PLOS ONE, 17*(1), e0262027. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0262027

Rudolph, F. (1990). *The American college and university: A history.* University of Georgia Press.

Saunders, M., Charlier, B., & Bonamy, J. (2005). Using evaluation to create 'provisional stabilities': Bridging innovation in higher education change processes. *Evaluation, 11*(1), 37–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389005053188

Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (Vol. 2). John Wiley & Sons.

Schroeder, C. C., & Pike, G. R. (2001). The scholarship of application in student affairs. *Journal of College Student Development, 42*(4), 342–355.

Schuh, J. H., Biddix, J. P., Dean, L. A., & Kinzie, J. (2016). *Assessment in student affairs* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Schuh, J. H., Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & ProQuest. (2017). *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (6th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Soares, J. A. (2007). *The power of privilege: Yale and America's elite colleges.* Stanford University Press.

Sriram, R. (2011). Engaging research as a student affairs professional. *Net Results: Critical Issues for Student Affairs Practitioners.*

Sriram, R. (2014a). Five things not to do in developing surveys for assessment in student affairs. *NASPA Research and Policy Institute Brief*, 1-11.

Sriram, R. (2014b). The development, validity, and reliability of a psychometric instrument measuring competencies in student affairs. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 51*(4), 349–363.

Sriram, R. (2017a). We need researchers...so let's stop using the term assessment. *About Campus, 22*(2), 28–31. https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.21273

Sriram, R. (2017b). *Student affairs by the numbers.* Stylus.

Sriram, R., & Oster, M. (2012). Reclaiming the" scholar" in scholar-practitioner. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 49*(4), 377-396.

Sriram, R., Scales, T. L., & Oster, M. (2011). Between the ideal and the practical: Using assessment to find the balance. *About Campus, 16*(4), 26–29. https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20071

Sriram, R., Haynes, C., Cheatle, J., Marquart, C. P., Murray, J. L., & Weintraub, S. D. (2020) The development and validation of an instrument measuring academic, social, and deeper life interactions. *Journal of College Student Development, 61*(5), 240-245.

Sriram, R., Weintraub, S. D., Cheatle, J., Haynes, C., Murray, J. L., & Marquart, C. P. (2020) The influence of academic, social, and deeper life interactions on students' psychological sense of community. *Journal of College Student Development, 61*(5), 593-608.

Stewart, T. J., Linder, C., Evans, M. E., Quaye, S. J., & Lange, A. C. (2020). "You hired me to do this": Power, identity, and student activist support. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2020.1778486

Stewart, T. J., & Quaye, S. J. (2019). Building bridges: Rethinking student activist leadership. In M. C. Linder & B. M. Williams (Eds.), *Leadership learning through activism* (Vol. 2019, pp. 51–63). John Wiley & Sons.

Strietzel, J., Kaul, C. R., & Sriram, R. (2020). Overall effectiveness of a student affairs scholar practitioner workshop: A mixed methods study. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 57*(4), 441–456. https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2019.1707091

Thelin, J. R. (2011). *A history of American higher education.* Johns Hopkins University Press.

Van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing.* Left Coast Press.

Vonderembse, M. A. (2018). C*risis in higher education: A customer-focused, resource management resolution.* CRC Press.

Zylstra, J. J. (2011). Why is the gap so wide between

espousing a social justice agenda to promote learn-
ing and enacting it? In P. M. Magolda & M. B. Baxter
Magolda (Eds.), *Contested issues in student affairs*
(pp. 375–386). Stylus Publishing.

Jeff Strietzel (he/him) is serving as a Postdoctoral
Teaching Fellow in Educational Leadership and Facul-
ty in Residence at Baylor University and Editor of Stu-
dent Affairs on Campus journal.

Rishi Sriram is serving as an Associate Professor of
Higher Education & Student Affairs, Graduate Program
Director, and Faculty Steward at Baylor University and
Editor of Journal of the First-Year Experience & Stu-
dents in Transition.